

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A client device, comprising:
 - a connection interface operable to connect to a server ~~through~~ over a network;
 - a receiver operable to receive content data ~~for displaying content~~;
 - a data storage unit operable to store a plurality of icon identification data sets such that each a given one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to a different specific one of a plurality of icons;
 - a display unit operable to display a user list identifying a plurality of users of said client device, and when a given one of the plurality of users is selected and verified, to display the content based on the content data, and to display a plurality of icon buttons such that a given one of the plurality of icon buttons represents a particular one of the plurality of icons, and to display a plurality of visual clues whereby a given one of the plurality of visual clues is associated with a specific one of a plurality of members of a buddy list associated with that user and indicates an on-line status of a client device associated with that member, the plurality of visual clues being smaller than a depiction of the plurality of members of the buddy list, said display unit being operable to display the depiction of the plurality of members of the buddy list in place of the plurality of visual clues;
 - a selection unit ~~enabling~~ operable to receive from a first user to a selection of a desired one of the plurality of icon buttons; and
 - a transmitter operable to transmit a request to the server, the request including ~~the~~ a respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets, that the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data

sets correspondings to the—an individual one of the plurality of icons that is represented by the selected one of the plurality of icon buttons, and including a command that the server transmit the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets to another client device connected to the server.

2. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the data storage unit stores icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons—~~that correspond to the icon identification data sets.~~

3. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a data receiver operable to receive icon display and audio data from the server, the icon display and audio data ~~being for~~ executing the plurality of icons—~~that correspond to the icon identification data sets.~~

4. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a data receiver operable to connect to the Internet and to receive, over the Internet, icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons—~~that correspond to the icon identification data sets.~~

5. (cancelled)

6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ~~command request~~ indicates a group of other the—client devices to which the server is to transmit the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets.

8. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to ~~an—the~~ icon that represents a comment on the content and that offers users of the group of other client devices possible responses to the comment.

9. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 8, further comprising a response receiver operable to receive the responses to the comment from the group of other client devices, the display unit displaying a result of the responses.

10. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon representing a question and possible answers.

11. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 10, further comprising an answer receiver operable to receive the answers to the question from the group of other client devices, the display unit displaying a result of the answers.

12. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the display unit displays selected content, and the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon that invites a user of the another client device to watch the selected content.

13. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the respective one of plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon that represents a comment on the content and that offers a user of the another client device possible responses to the comment.

14. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets corresponds to an icon representing a social interaction having only a single possible positive response.

15. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the display unit displays selected content, and the selected icon button represents an invitation icon for inviting

a user of the another client device to watch the selected content.

16. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 15, wherein the selected content is broadcast content.

17. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 15, wherein the selected content is pay content.

18. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 17, wherein when the given one of the plurality of first users selects the desired one of the plurality of icon buttons using the selection unit, the display unit displays an interface that provides ~~the first~~ that user with an option of paying fees for the pay content for the user of the another client device.

19. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the pay content is pay per view.

20. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the pay content is video on demand.

21. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 15, wherein the command transmitted by the transmitter also commands the server to transmit an invitation to devices other than the another client devices.

22. (currently amended) A client device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a chat unit operable to communicate with a plurality of other client devices in a chat group and to control the display unit to display the content and chat text based on data received from the plurality of other client devices in the chat group, the command transmitted by the transmitter commanding the server to transmit the respective one of the plurality of icon identification data sets to the plurality of other client devices in the chat group.

23. (original) A client device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the display unit displays the icon buttons superimposed on the content.

24. (currently amended) A method of interactive television communication between a plurality of client devices each of which is connected to a server ~~through~~ over a network, said method comprising:

receiving, over the network from each one of the plurality of client devices, information on a television viewing status of ~~the~~ that client devices;

preparing a buddy list associated with a given one of a plurality of users of a given one of the plurality of client devices, the buddy list having a plurality of members whereby a given one of the plurality of members is associated with a particular ~~of client devices~~ for one of the plurality of client devices, the buddy list including the information on the television viewing status of each one of the associated client devices ~~in the buddy list~~;

sending the information on the television viewing status of the associated client devices ~~in the buddy list~~ over the network to the given one of the plurality of client devices so that a display unit of the given one of the plurality of client devices displays a plurality of visual clues such that a given one of the plurality of visual clues is associated with a specific one of the plurality of members of the buddy list and indicates the on-line status of the client device associated with that member, the plurality of visual clues being smaller than a depiction of the plurality of members of the buddy list that display unit may display in place of the plurality of visual clues;

receiving, ~~a request over the network from the given one of the plurality of client devices, a request to execute a desired one of a plurality of icons at a ~~particular~~ respective one of the plurality of client devices ~~in the buddy list~~; and~~

sending icon identification data corresponding to the desired one of the plurality of icons over the network to the ~~particular~~ respective one of the plurality of client devices ~~in the buddy list~~.

25. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the given one of the plurality of client devices displays selected content, and the icon identification data corresponds to an icon that invites a user of ~~the particular a~~ client device associated with a particular one of the plurality of members in the buddy list to watch the selected content.

26. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

receiving an agreement to watch the selected content from the ~~particular associated~~ client device ~~in the buddy list~~; and

communicating with the ~~one client device and the particular associated~~ client device ~~in the buddy list~~ to synchronize display of the selected content at the given one of the plurality of client devices and the associated particular ~~client device in the buddy list~~.

27. (original) A method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the selected content is broadcast content.

28. (original) A method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the selected content is pay content.

29. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising charging fees for the pay content for the ~~particular associated~~ client device to the given one of the plurality of client devices when the request indicates that a user of the one client device has agreed to pay the fees for the pay content for the ~~particular associated~~ client device.

30. (original) A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pay content is pay per view.

31. (original) A method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the pay content is video on demand.

32. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising discounting fees charged to the given one of the plurality of client devices for the pay content when the user of the ~~particular-associated~~ client device has agreed to pay for the pay content for the ~~particular-associated~~ client device.

33. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising providing incentive points to the given one of the plurality of client devices when the user of the ~~particular-associated~~ client device agrees to pay for the pay content for the ~~particular-associated~~ client device.

34. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising receiving agreement-to-pay information from the ~~particular-associated~~ client device when the user of the ~~particular-associated~~ client device has agreed to pay for the pay content for the ~~particular-associated~~ client device.

35. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 28, further comprising sending further icon identification data to the ~~particular-associated~~ client device when the user of the ~~particular-associated~~ client device has not agreed to pay for the pay content ~~for the particular client device~~, the further icon identification data identifying an icon ~~at the particular client device~~ for urging the user of the ~~particular-associated~~ client device to pay for the pay content ~~for the particular client device~~.

36. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

searching, by the server, for an online device having a ~~user who is the same user as the user that~~ of the ~~particular-associated~~ client device when the ~~particular-associated~~ client device is not online; and

sending, from the server to the online device, an invitation to watch the selected content.

37. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising exchanging chat text between other ones of the plurality of client devices in a chat group, wherein the icon identification data is transmitted from the given one of the plurality of client devices to other the other ones of the plurality of client devices in the chat group.

38. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the information on the television viewing status includes information indicating ~~ones~~ which ones of the plurality of client devices in that are associated with the plurality of members of the buddy list are displaying the same television programs.

39. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising receiving from the particular client device associated with the given one of the plurality of members in the buddy list a response indicating execution of the desired icon.

40. (original) A method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the icon identification data represents an icon having a comment about television content, and the response represents agreement or disagreement with the comment.

41. (original) A method as claimed in claim 39, wherein the icon identification data represents an icon having a question and possible answers, and the response represents one of the possible answers.

42. (original) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data represents an expression.

43. (original) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data represents information about a television program.

44. (original) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data represents advertisement information.

45. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising sending a command with the icon identification data, the command instructing the particular client device associated with the given one of the plurality of members in the buddy list to execute ~~an~~the icon corresponding to the icon identification data using icon display and audio data stored locally in ~~the particular that~~ client device ~~in the buddy list~~.

46. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the icon identification data includes icon display and audio data for executing the desired icon in the particular client device associated with the given one of the plurality of members in the buddy list.

47. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the request from the one client device includes a request to execute the desired icon at a ~~group~~portion of the plurality of client devices ~~watching that are displaying~~ the same television content.

48. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 47, wherein the ~~group~~portion of the plurality of client devices includes client devices not associated with the plurality of members of ~~in~~ the buddy list.

49. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 24, further comprising suggesting icons to the particular client devices associated with the given one of the plurality of members in the buddy list.

50. (currently amended) A method of interactive television communication between a plurality of client devices connected to a server ~~through over~~ a network, said method comprising:

receiving content data at a ~~first-given~~ one of the plurality of client devices;

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a user list identifying a plurality of users of that client device; and

when a given one of the plurality of users is selected and verified,

displaying content based on the received content data ~~received at the first-given one of the plurality of client devices,~~

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a plurality of icon buttons associated with a plurality of icons each—whereby a given one of the plurality of icon buttons represents a different particular one of a plurality of icons,

displaying, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a plurality of visual clues whereby a given one of the plurality of visual clues is associated with a specific one of a plurality of members of a buddy list associated with the given one of the plurality of users and indicates an on-line status of the client device associated with that member, the plurality of visual clues being smaller than a depiction of the plurality of members of the buddy list that may be displayed in place of the plurality of visual clues,

selecting, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, a desired one of the plurality of icon buttons, ~~representing a desired icon;~~

selecting, at the given one of the plurality of client devices, another one of the plurality of client devices,

sending, a request from the first-given one of the plurality of client devices to the server, the a request including an instruction that the desired one of the

plurality of icons be executed at the another one of the plurality of client devices, ~~and~~

~~receiving the request at the server over the network;~~

sending icon identification data ~~corresponding to~~ associated with the desired-selected one of the plurality of icons over the network via the server to the another one of the plurality of client devices; ~~receiving the icon identification data at~~ whereby the another one of the client devices ~~and~~ executing the selected one of the plurality of icons ~~at the another one of the client devices~~ based on the associated icon identification data.

51. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising storing, in each one of the plurality of the client devices, icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons, the sent icon identification data indicating a portion of the stored ~~the icon display and audio data that is~~ for executing the ~~desired-selected one of the plurality of icon.~~

52. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the step of sending icon identification data includes sending icon display and audio data for executing the ~~desired selected one of the plurality of icons~~ at the another one of the client devices.

53. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising connecting the server to the Internet and receiving, over the Internet, icon display and audio data for executing the plurality of icons, the server sending selected icon display and audio data for executing the ~~desired-selected one of the plurality of icons~~ with the icon identification data.

54. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 50, further comprising connecting the another one of the client devices to the Internet and receiving, over the Internet, icon display and audio data for executing the ~~desired-selected one of the plurality of icons.~~

55. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the ~~first-given~~ one of the plurality of client devices displays selected content, and the icon identification data corresponds to ~~an~~ the icon that invites a user of the another one of the client devices to watch the selected content.

56. (original) A method as claimed in claim 55, wherein the selected content is broadcast content.

57. (original) A method as claimed in claim 55, wherein the selected content is pay content.

58. (original) A method as claimed in claim 57, further comprising executing, at the another one of the client devices, a confirmation icon that informs the user that the selected content is pay content which requires payment of a charge.

59. (original) A method as claimed in claim 58, wherein the confirmation icon enables the user of the another one of the client devices to agree to pay for the pay content with a single operation.

60. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising discounting, at the server, fees charged to the ~~first-given~~ one of the plurality of client devices for the pay content when the user of the another one of the client devices has agreed to pay for the pay content.

61. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising providing, at the server, incentive points to the ~~first-given~~ one of the plurality of client devices when the user of the another one of the client devices has agreed to pay for the pay content.

62. (original) A method as claimed in claim 59, further comprising sending agreement-to-pay information from the another one of the client devices to the server when the user of the another one of the client devices has agreed to pay for the pay content.

63. (original) A method as claimed in claim 58, further comprising sending further icon identification data from the server to the another one of the client devices when the user of the another one of the client devices has not agreed to pay for the pay content, the further icon identification data identifying an icon at the another one of the client devices for urging the user of the another one of the client devices to pay for the pay content.

64. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 57, further comprising charging, at the server, fees for the pay content for the another one of the client devices to the ~~first~~ given one of the plurality of client devices when the request indicates that a user of the ~~first-given one of the plurality of~~ client devices has agreed to pay the fees for the pay content for the another one of the client devices.

65. (original) A method as claimed in claim 57, wherein the pay content is pay per view.

66. (original) A method as claimed in claim 57, wherein the pay content is video on demand.

67. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 55, further comprising:

searching, by the server, for an online device having ~~a user who is the same as the user~~ as that of the another one of the client devices when the another one of the client devices is not online; and

sending from the server to the online device an invitation to watch the selected content.

68. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 55, further comprising exchanging chat text between client devices in a chat group, wherein the icon identification data is transmitted from the ~~first-given one of the plurality of~~ client devices to other client devices in the chat group.

69. (original) A method as claimed in claim 50, wherein the step of displaying the icon buttons includes displaying the icon buttons superimposed on the content.